

Message Text

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USMISSION USUN NEW YORK IMMEDIATE
INFO AMEMBASSY BONN
AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM
AMCONSUL DURBAN
AMEMBASSY GABORONE
AMCONSUL JOHANNESBURG
AMEMBASSY MAPUTO
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 3 CAPE TOWN 990

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PDEV, RH
SUBJECT: RHODESIA: THE INTERNAL SETTLEMENT: A SLOW START

1. SUMMARY: THE HOVE EPISODE HAS FURTHER EXPOSED MUZOREWA'S
POLITICAL INEPTNESS AND WEAKENED THE UNITY OF THE UANC.
THE BISHOP CLEARLY APPEARS PREOCCUPIED WITH GETTING ON WITH
THE TRANSITION PROCESS SO THAT HE CAN ASSUME POWER.
ELECTIONS BY THE END OF THE YEAR, HOWEVER, ARE INCREASINGLY
UNCERTAIN. MENAWHILE, THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL HAS DONE LITTLE
SO FAR TO DEMONSTRATE THAT A REAL TRANSITION IS TAKING
PLACE. THERE HAS BEEN LIMITED PROGRESS IN THE FIELD OF
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ENDING DISCRIMINATION AND NO SIGNIFICANT ADVANCE IN TERMS
OF INTERNATIONAL RECOGNITION. AT THE SAME TIME,
INDICATIONS ARE THAT SECURITY CONTINUES GRADUALLY TO WORSEN.
ANOTHER CRISIS WITHIN THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL COULD WELL FORCE A
SPLIT WITHIN THE UANC WITH EITHER THE BISHOP OR A LEFT-WING
ELEMENT OF THE PARTY BREAKING AWAY FROM THE INTERNAL SETTLEMENT.
END SUMMARY.

2. AS NOTED IN AN EARLIER ASSESSMENT (CAPE TOWN 752), THE SUCCESS OF THE INTERNAL SETTLEMENT WILL BE MEASURED BY THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL CAN MAINTAIN UNITY, SHOW PROGRESS TOWARD INSTITUTION OF A NEW ORDER AND HOLD THE LINE ON THE SECURITY FRONT. IN ITS FIRST FEW WEEKS, THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL WEATHERED SOME INITIAL TESTS OF ITS COHESIVENESS, INCLUDING THE QUESTION OF DIVISION OF MINISTERIAL SEATS AMONG THE BLACK MEMBERS. DURING THE PAST TWO WEEKS, HOWEVER, THE COUNCIL ENCOUNTERED A MUCH MORE SERIOUS CRISIS, THE FIRING OF THE BLACK CO-MINISTER OF JUSTICE, LAW AND ORDER, BYRON HOVE, AND MUZOREWA'S SHORT-LIVED THREATS TO WITHDRAW (PRETORIA 2536 AND PREVIOUS).

3. THE BRITISH CARETAKER IN SALISBURY, FRAZIER WILSON, TOLD US RECENTLY THAT THERE WAS A "VEHEMENT" BLACK GRASSROOTS REACTION TO THE HOVE SACKING AND THAT IT HAD FURTHER STIRRED UP ALREADY SIMMERING DISSATISFACTION AMONG SOME ELEMENTS IN THE UANC NATIONAL EXECUTIVE WITH MUZOREWA'S PUSILLANIMOUS BEHAVIOR. BUT MUZOREWA'S BELATED SHOW OF OUTRAGE AND THE ABSENCE OF ANY CREDIBLE ALTERNATIVE WITHIN THE UANC TO HIS LEADERSHIP WON A REPORTEDLY 80 PERCENT ENDORSEMENT IN THE NATIONAL EXECUTIVE FOR ANOTHER BACKDOWN.

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4. NEVERTHELESS, THE EPISODE HAS FURTHER EXPOSED MUZOREWA'S POLITICAL INEPTNESS AND WEAKENED THE UNITY OF THE UANC. THE BISHOP'S OWN STRIDENT COMPLAINTS AGAINST THE WAY THE SYSTEM IS WORKING AND THE UANC DECISION NOT TO PARTICIPATE IN JOINT RALLYS WITH THE OTHER MEMBERS OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL ALSO HAS UNDERLINED THE BASIC INSTABILITY OF THE TRANSITION ARRANGEMENT. MUZOREWA CONSISTENTLY FINDS HIMSELF OPPOSED BY AN "UNHOLY ALLIANCE" OF THE OTHER THREE MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL, WHO TOGETHER WOULD STILL APPEAR TO HAVE FAR LESS POPULAR SUPPORT THAN HE. BUT THE FACT THAT HE WAS AGAIN FORCED TO GIVE WAY ON A MAJOR ISSUE REFLECTS THE EXTENT TO WHICH HE IS ENMESHED IN THE INTERNAL SETTLEMENT PROCESS. CLEARLY, THE BISHOP DOES NOT WANT SHOWDOWNS OVER ISSUES, INCLUDING THOSE RAISED BY HOVE; INSTEAD, HE SEEMS PREOCCUPIED WITH GETTING ON WITH THE TRANSITION PROCESS SO THAT HE CAN ASSUME POWER.

5. ELECTIONS BY THE END OF THE YEAR, HOWEVER, ARE INCREASINGLY UNCERTAIN. THE CONSTITUTIONAL DRAFTING COMMITTEE IS AT WORK AND, ACCORDING TO THE MAY 3 STATEMENT BY THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL, PREPARATIONS ARE UNDERWAY TO REGISTER THE 3 MILLION POTENTIAL VOTERS. THE STATEMENT,

HOWEVER, NOTABLY OMITTED ANY REFERENCE TO THE DECEMBER 31 TARGET DATE FOR INDEPENDENCE AND THE REGISTRAR-GENERAL RECENTLY STATED PUBLICLY THAT HE WAS NOT CERTAIN ELECTIONS COULD BE HELD THIS YEAR. SMITH, CHIRAU AND SITHOLE COMBINED COULD PROBABLY NOT HOPE TO WIN A MAJORITY IN ANY FREE ELECTIONS AGAINST THE BISHOP AND THEY ARE THUS NOT ENTHUSIASTIC ABOUT AN EARLY POLL EVEN IF REGISTRATION WAS POSSIBLE; INDEED, THEY MAY WELL WORK TOGETHER TO DELAY THE PROCESS. MUZOREWA RECENTLY DEMANDED A FIXED TIMETABLE TO ENSURE A GENERAL POLL THIS YEAR, BUT AS WITH HIS OTHER DEMANDS, THIS ONE COULD ALSO MELT AWAY.

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6. MEANWHILE, THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL HAS DONE LITTLE SO FAR TO DEMONSTRATE THAT A REAL TRANSITION IS TAKING PLACE. THE MOST IMPORTANT STEP TO DATE HAS BEEN THE RELEASE OF SOME 700 DETAINEES, THE MAJORITY OF WHOM ARE UANC (MUZOREWA) OR ANC (SITHOLE) SUPPORTERS. THE NEW REGIME HAS ABOLISHED CAPITAL PUNISHMENT FOR POLITICALLY-RELATED CRIMES, AND IN ITS MAY 2 DECLARATION PROMISED THAT THE GOVT WOULD DISMANTLE PROTECTIVE VILLAGES

"AS THE FIGHTING DIED DOWN" (CAPE TOWN 884). THIS WOULD BE A POPULAR MOVE AMONG BLACKS, BUT RHODESIAN MILITARY COMMANDERS STRONGLY OPPOSE IT, AND ACCORDING TO CABINET SECRETARY GAYLARD, SUCH ACTION IS UNLIKELY
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IN THE NEAR FUTURE (LUSAKA 1495).

7. THE NEW GOVT HAS OFFERED AN AMNESTY PROGRAM TO RETURNING GUERRILLAS (PRETORIA 405) AND SITHOLE HAS RECENTLY MOOTED SCHEMES FOR FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR RETURNEES. THE MAY 3 EXECUTIVE COUNCIL DECLARATION SAID "ARRANGEMENTS" WERE BEING MADE FOR RECEPTION OF RETURNING GUERRILLAS. NO SIGNIFICANT NUMBERS, HOWEVER, HAVE YET ANSWERED THE CALL; AT LEAST THERE HAS BEEN NO CLAIM TO THAT EFFECT. ANOTHER INDICATOR OF THE LIMITED POSSIBILITIES IN THIS AREA WAS MUZOREWA'S FAILURE, DURING HIS RECENT TRIP TO GABORONE, TO PERSUADE RHODESIAN REFUGEES IN BOTSWANA TO RETURN. THE BISHOP'S UNFRIENDLY RECEPTION BY REFUGEE ELEMENTS APPARENTLY CUASED HIM TO CUT SHORT HIS TRIP (GABORONE 1148).

8. THERE HAS ALSO BEEN LIMITED PROGRESS IN THE AREA OF ENDING DISCRIMINATION. ACCORDING TO THE RHODESIAN PRESS, THE MUNICIPAL COUNCIL OF SALISBURY RECENTLY SHELVED FOR AT LEAST A YEAR PLANS TO DROP RESIDENTIAL AND PUBLIC FACILITY RESTRICTIONS BASED ON RACE. STORIES ALSO CONTINUE TO APPEAR IN THE PRESS OF BLACKS, INCLUDING UANC OFFICIALS, BEING REFUSED SERVICE IN WHITE ESTABLISHMENTS. OVERALL, LITTLE HAS APPARENTLY CHANGED IN THE DAILY LIFE OF THE AVERAGE BLACK RHODESIAN EITHER IN THE URBAN AREAS OR IN THE TRIBAL TRUST LANDS.

9. ON THE INTERNATIONAL FRONT, THE COUNCIL'S SUCCESS TO DATE HAS PROBABLY ALSO BEEN LESS THAN HOPED FOR. MUZOREWA'S TRIP TO GABORONE PROVIDED NO ENCOURAGEMENT AND EVEN PRESIDENT BANDA CONTINUES TO AVOID EMBRACING THE NEW REGIME. RECENT VISITS TO JOHANNESBURG AND CAPE TOWN OF BLACK AND WHITE MINISTERIAL COUNCIL
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MEMBERS (CAPE TOWN 728, 953) SUGGESTS THAT RELATIONS WITH SOUTH AFRICA WILL NOT BE AN ISSUE WITHIN THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL AT LEAST DURING THE TRANSITION PERIOD AND POSSIBLY AFTERWARDS. SUCH VISITS ALSO HIGHLIGHT THE EMBARRASSING REALITY THAT THE SAG REMAINS THE

ONLY EXCEPTION TO RHODESIA'S ISOLATION.

10. THERE HAS BEEN NO DISCERNABLE SHIFT IN THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL'S NEGATIVE VIEW TOWARD EARLY RESUMPTION OF INTERNATIONAL NEGOTIATIONS. THE BLACK MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL APPARENTLY REMAIN UNITED IN THEIR STRONG OPPOSITION TO THE ANGLO-AMERICAN EFFORTS. SMITH WAS, IN FACT, REPORTEDLY IN FAVOR OF A MORE POSITIVE REPLY TO THE PROPOSAL FOR AN ALL-PARTIES CONFERENCE THAN HIS BLACK COLLEAGUES. WE SUSPECT, HOWEVER, THAT THIS WAS MORE A DIFFERENCE IN PERCEPTION OF TACTICS THAN IN STRATEGY.

11. THE INTERIM REGIME CANNOT CLAIM ANY SIGNIFICANT IMPROVEMENT IN THE SECURITY SITUATION; RATHER, INDICATIONS ARE THAT SECURITY CONTINUES GRADUALLY TO WORSEN PARTICULARLY IN THE TRIBAL TRUST LANDS (CAPE TOWN 948). SO FAR THERE HAS BEEN NO SIGN OF A SIGNIFICANT MILITARY OFFENSIVE BY PATRIOTIC FRONT FORCES, AND THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL HAS YET TO FACT THE TEST OF A MAJOR INCIDENT. AT SOME POINT, THE COUNCIL WILL PROBABLY RECEIVE A PROPOSAL BY THE MILITARY FOR A MAJOR COUNTER-STRIKE INTO MOZAMBIQUE AND ZAMBIA. SUCH AN EVENTUALITY WOULD POSE ANOTHER TEST OF MUZOREWA'S COMMITMENT TO THE INTERNAL AGREEMENT AND OF UANC'S CONTINUED WILLINGNESS TO BACK THE BISHOP.

12. CONCLUSIONS: THE INTERIM REGIME IS OFF TO A POOR START AND MAY HAVE ACTUALLY LOST GROUND IN TERMS OF THE EXPECTATIONS OF THE BLACK POPULATION. THE NEXT FEW MONTHS WILL BE A TIME OF CRITICAL TESTING FOR THE CONFIDENTIAL

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UANC AS WELL AS THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL.

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13. ANOTHER CTISIS WITHIN THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL COULD CONCEIVABLY FORCE THE BISHOP TO BREAK AWAY IN THIS CASE, SMITH WOULD VERY LIKELY ATTEMPT TO SPLINTER OFF A RIGHT-WING FACTION OF THE UANC AND POSSIBLY REPLACE MUZOREWA IN THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL WITH CHICKAREMA. THE BISHOP WITH MAJORITY BACKING OF THE UANC NATIONAL EXECUTIVE, MIGHT THEN BE WILLING TO COOPERATE ONCE AGAIN WITH EFFORTS TO FIND AN INTERNATIONAL SOLUTION. BEING IN A WEAKENED POSITION, HE MIGHT ALSO EXPLORE THE POSSIBILITY OF A POLITICAL ALLIANCE WITH EITHER MUGABE OR NKOMO. IT SEEMS JUST AS POSSIBLE, HOWEVER, THAT MUZOREWA WILL BE AFRAID TO GET OFF THE TIGER AND IN
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SUCH EVENT A LEFT-WING FACTION IN THE UANC COULD BREAK AWAY.

14. IT REMAINS CONCEIVABLE, OF COURSE, THAT THE SALISBURY COALITION WILL BE ABLE TO HOLD TOGETHER AND MANIFEST IN SOME MINIMALLY CONVINCING WAY THAT A TRANSITION AWAY FROM THE OLD ORDER IS TAKING PLACE AND TO ESTABLISH SUFFICIENT SECURITY TO CARRY THROUGH TO THE END ITS PROCLAIMED COURSE--ELECTION OF A BLACK MAJORITY GOVERNMENT BY THE END OF THE YEAR.

15. IF, HOWEVER, THERE IS NO SIGNIFICANT DEFECTION FROM THE GUERRILLA RANKS AND THE WAR CONTINUES ITS PRESENT SCALE OR ESCALATES, THE PROTECTED VILLAGES ARE NOT LIKELY TO BE DISMANTLED AND THE MAMMOUTH TASK OF VOTER

REGISTRATION WILL PROBABLY NOT GET OFF THE GROUND.
IN THIS CASE, THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL WILL, AS AMBASSADOR
LOW SUGGESTS (LUSAKA 1459), BE TEMPTED TO ABANDON THE
IDEA OF ELECTIONS THIS YEAR; PROCLAIM A CONSTITUTION
LEGITIMIZED ONLY THROUGH A WHITE REFERENDUM, AND CONSTITUTE
ITSELF AS A GOVERNMENT. THE THREE BLACKS AND SMITH WOULD THEN
RULE AS A JUNTA, POSSIBLY WITH MUZOREWA AS PRESIDENT, PROPPED
UP BY THE WHITE POWER STRUCTURE.

16. THIS WOULD BE THE ULTIMATE STAGE IN SMITH'S POLITICAL
STRATEGY OVER THE YEARS OF GRADUALLY MOVING TO INCREASE
THE NUMBER AND THE ROLE OF DEPENDENT BLACKS IN THE
GOVERNMENT. IN A DETERIORATING SITUATION, THE ALTERNATIVE
FOR THE SALISBURY GROUP WOULD BE TO TURN BACK TO THE
NEGOTIATING TABLE. THE PATRIOTIC FRONT WOULD SURELY
SEE ANY SUCH DECISION IN THESE CIRCUMSTANCES AS A SIGN
OF WEAKNESS AND FAILURE AND IT WOULD IN TURN TOUGHEN
ITS CONDITIONS FOR A SETTLEMENT.
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